

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War II Veterans' Project

37th Division Veteran

O. H. 226

STEPHEN H. JAVORSKY

Interviewed

by

Jeffrey S. Suchanek

on

October 4, 1980

STEPHEN H. JAVORSKY

Steve "Tut" Javorsky was born on January 31, 1917 in Youngstown, Ohio, the son of Stephen and Maria Javorsky. Steve attended South High School, but was forced to terminate his education due to the economic situation caused by the Great Depression in the 1930's.

After employment in the steel and coal industries, Steve was drafted into the United States Army on January 27, 1941 and assigned to the Headquarters Battery of the 135th Field Artillery.

Drafted initially for only a year, Javorsky's term of service was extended first by an Act of Congress in October of 1941, and then by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. "Tut" subsequently saw action during the New Georgia, Bougainville, and Philippine Campaigns in the South Pacific, against the Japanese as a forward observer for the artillery. For the heroic act of eliminating an enemy machine gun position and rescuing wounded comrades while under direct and heavy fire on Bougainville, Steve was awarded the Silver Star medal. He also received the Bronze Star medal for actions he performed during the Philippine Campaign.

Discharged from the Army on August 10, 1945, Steve

Javorsky attended the Industrial Training Institute in Chicago, Illinois from 1945 to 1946. He returned to Youngstown and married his wife, Josephine, on September 13, 1948, and they subsequently raised five children: Barbara, Steve, Connie, Jeffrey, and Bill.

Steve was employed by the Plumbers and Fitters Union Local 87 until his retirement in January of 1980. A member of St. Joseph's Church, Steve also belongs to the 37th Division Veterans Association.

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INTERVIEWEE: STEPHEN H. JAVORSKY

INTERVIEWER: Jeffrey Suchanek

SUBJECT: Bougainville, New Georgia, Philippines,  
Camp Shelby, Jungle Fighting

DATE: October 4, 1980

S: This is an interview with Steven Javorsky, for the Youngstown State University World War II Veterans' project, by Jeffrey Scott Suchanek, on October 4, 1980, at 3973 Edinburg Drive, Austintown, Ohio, at approximately 10:35 a.m.

Okay Steve tell us a little bit about your background, your childhood, where you were born and when, where you grew up, and some of your friends' names.

J: I was born on 802 Franklin Avenue in Youngstown, January 31, 1917. I went to St. Cyril and Methodius School for eight years, went to Wilson for a year, and South three years. I went into the service, but before that I went to the CCC camps.

S: What are the CCC camps?

J: The Civilian Conservation Corps. It got us bums off the street, or we would be in trouble. I spent most of my time in Metropolitan Park in Akron at Camp Sand Run, working in the woods, building roads, and cutting trees. It was good experience.

I got out of that and came to Youngstown, but I couldn't find work. I finally got a job. I snuck into Republic Steel. I worked there eleven months just before the strike--a sit-down strike. I guess I must have been an agitator or something because I got fired. I wouldn't work in the rain!

S: Then you went into the service?

J: No, I went in the coal business after that. By the time the draft came along, and they took me into the service, I had two trucks. I was doing pretty good; and I lost all that. I spent four and a half, close to five years in the service, and when I came out, I couldn't go back into the business. I had no job or anything. I had to start from scratch, so I went to school. I went to the Industrial Training Institute in Chicago and took up air conditioning and refrigeration. I've been in that ever since. Now I am retired.

S: What can you remember about your education, your high school days?

J: Oh, not too much. I played a lot of hooky, I know that. (Laughter) That was the Depression time and it was pretty hard when you didn't have much. I was too proud to go to school with patches on my pants. Today kids won't go to school without patches on their pants.

S: Did you participate in any sports?

J: Oh, I played a lot of football. In fact, I broke my leg in 1932 playing football for St. Stans. I played football in the Army a little bit. I played a little baseball--sandlot, all sandlot. I was too light to play high school football.

S: Do you remember anything about the Depression? What did your father do during the Depression?

J: My father worked in a mill. My father got hurt in the mill. He worked maybe one or two days a week or every two weeks. Things were bad. That was the worst time of my life, I think--the Depression. We always managed to have food on the table. I had five sisters and two brothers and they all went out and worked--helped. My father eventually went blind from the accident in the mill. At that time there was no protection like today. They were bad times. That is why I went to the CCC camp. I got thirty bucks a week.

S: Can you remember your parents talking about the Depression or FDR?

- J: No, not too much. They talked about it, but they were more concerned with getting a little cash every now and then to feed the family. We had a big family. They had hard times in the Old Country before they came over, so they knew how to take it.
- S: They were immigrants then?
- J: Oh yes! Yes, they knew how to take it.
- S: What age did your parents come over? Do you know?
- J: Oh, the turn of the century, but I couldn't tell you exactly. I think my dad came over in the last part of the 1800's, but then he had to go back and serve time in the Austrian Army. Then he came back, married my mother in Pennsylvania, and migrated to Youngstown because the money was better. I think instead of eleven cents an hour, they were getting twelve cents here. He went to work in the steel mill.
- S: So did you graduate from high school?
- J: I got a GED [Government Equivalency Degree]. After I got out of the service, I took the exam.
- S: What is a GED?
- J: An education development test. I took the test and got my diploma.
- S: This was after the war?
- J: Yes. I took a few courses in the army and took some in the CCC when I was there. They were mostly mechanical courses, but I took a little aviation. The CCC captain I had was a reserve aviator, so he gave us a little bit of know-how on planes. But outside of that, my education, most of it, came after I got out of the service and during the service.
- S: In the CCC, what did you do? What did they have you do?
- J: Well, we built roads, and at that time we were cutting chestnut trees down that were killed by the blight. We were making shingles out of the wood, and delivering some of the wood to most of the poor people

in Akron. They would burn it in the winter time, just like they do today!

S: We're going back to that. Was it tough work? Did you get paid for it?

J: Oh, yes. We got thirty dollars a month. They sent twenty-five home, and they gave you five. It wasn't bad. It was like the Army without all the discipline. You had reserve officers in charge. It was like the Army, but with no military training.

S: You said you were drafted, what year was that?

J: I was lucky; I got one of the first numbers. I went in the service on January 27, 1941, down at Camp Shelby. I lived in tents for about a year. I was afraid I wasn't going to be accepted, but they took me.

S: Did you have your physical up in Cleveland?

J: I had my physical first, here in Youngstown, and then we went up to Cleveland for a day. We ran around the Armory up there naked and it was cold, believe me. But it was all right. They took all our booze away from us on the train. I couldn't keep warm.

S: What was your parents reaction to you getting drafted?

J: Well, my dad was dead. My mother, it's funny, but she always thought, well I guess from the old school, that there was nothing like a soldier--she was proud.

S: Were you anxious to go?

J: I wasn't too anxious because I had a little business going, but when my number came up, I figured I better go. I was afraid they wouldn't accept me.

S: Did you figure you would just put in your year and then come back?

J: That's it, one year! Well it lasted almost five, but that's all right, all expenses were paid.

S: When you arrived in Camp Shelby, Mississippi, can you remember what your first impression was when you got off the train?

J: Yes, it was a miserable place. For one thing, it was a lousy day; mist in the air, raining, and cold. When you got off that train, they marched you to a recreation hall. It was a mixed up affair at that time. I mean, I don't think anyone knew what the hell they were doing. On the train going down there, they interviewed you, and you told them what you wanted to do.

S: What did you tell them you wanted to do?

J: I told them I wanted to go into the tank corps. It was beginning. It was something new. My first tank was a wheelbarrow. (Laughter) They lined us up and sat us down in a recreation hall, and they called out a bunch of names. They said, "You stand on this wall with that sergeant over there, and another bunch of you stand over here." The next thing you know, the sergeants say, "Okay, let's go. This group go with me, this group go with you," and I ended up in the artillery.

S: That is how you ended up in the field artillery?

J: Right. There was no organization whatsoever at the time. Believe me, it was terrible. God Damn, they didn't know what they were doing.

S: During training, did they let you use real artillery pieces?

J: No, we didn't have any. I had what they called a mounted revolver because my outfit was originally a horsedrawn outfit. I had a Smith and Wesson .45 caliber six shooter. Not as big as a cannon but . . . (Laughter) They put me in headquarters battery. Half of the gun batteries had old French 75s from World War I and the other half who went out on maneuvers, or on the problems out in the field, used logs.

S: There just wasn't enough to go around?

J: There wasn't any to go around at the time. This went on for about four, five, or six months!

S: What kind of training did they give you?

J: You went through basic, but mostly marching. It was the old Army. It was pretty strict and tough. You couldn't get away with anything: a button missing, no weekend pass.



KP, oh, I've done more KP. I should have dishpan hands for the rest of my life. The training was tough. Most of our noncoms /Commissioned Officers/ and officers were National Guard, Ohio National Guard in the 37th. They kind of, a little bit, lorded over us for awhile, but then they had to baby us after that. They had to show us how to make bunks and all that. In fact, we had some pretty tough noncoms. You couldn't get away with anything.

S: When did they let you train on your first artillery piece?

J: I never did train on an artillery piece. I was in headquarters battery, and I was in the survey section. It was our job to fire the guns through fire direction.

S: What is fire direction?

J: Fire direction is a bunch of mathematicians working over maps. In my job, I was a forward observer. I would call in my sensings, or my observations, and give them coordinates on the map and so forth. They would plot the fire direction then send these commands to the gun batteries and the batteries would fire on that particular target that I picked out. Everything was computed down in the fire direction. It was their job to make sure that the rounds hit right where I said.

S: What kind of ordnance did the 135th Field Artillery have? What kind of cannons did they have?

J: You can't call it a cannon! I had to salute a post 100 times because I called an artillery piece a cannon. It is not a cannon; it's an artillery piece! We had the 105 Howitzer. I think it was one of the best guns ever built, and it was American made. It was a good artillery piece. After all my time in the service, I got to like it. I could drop a shell into a "Nip's" hip pocket.

S: Was the 105 considered a medium field piece?

J: No, it was a beautiful light artillery gun. The best gun they ever built for jungle fighting. We had some good people in the unit and they figured you have to have high angle firing in the jungles. That was all figured out in our 135th, in our headquarters battery.

- S: On December 7, 1941, do you remember what you were doing when you heard the news of Pearl Harbor?
- J: Well, I'll tell you what I was doing: I was in charge of quarters that day. It was a weekend and most of the guys were out having a good time at either New Orleans or down at Hattiesburgh some place. I was CQ [Charge of Quarters] and I was playing records. Some guy came over from B Battery and hollered, "Hey, Hey, Pearl Harbor was bombed!" I never even heard of the place!
- S: You didn't know what it was?
- J: I didn't know. So, we turned the radio on and we heard people screaming, but I didn't know. We looked it up and, sure enough it was in Hawaii. I knew something was coming, but when, we didn't know.
- S: So actually the attack didn't shock you or wasn't a surprise to you?
- J: No, no it wasn't, because the October before that our time was extended from one year to eighteen months. And after Pearl Harbor, it was for the duration, plus ten years or something. I forget what it was. So I knew something was coming up. I knew we had to get into it sooner or later.
- S: Did you consider Germany more of a threat than Japan? Did you figure the 37th Division, if the United States got involved in the war, would be going to Europe?
- J: Well, we were headed for Europe. After we got into it and after everything kind of settled down, we were scheduled to go to Europe to begin with. We went from Camp Shelby to Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania. I guess, from what I understood, we were going over on the Normandy, but she capsized before we ever had a chance to get on her. Then our orders were changed and we went down to San Francisco. They were still fighting in the Philippines and we figured we were going to go there, most of us. I didn't realize what was going on at the time. We didn't realize the Japanese Navy controlled the Pacific. We thought sure as hell we were going to the Philippines.
- S: Did you feel the war was going to be a short one?
- J: Well, we didn't think too much of the Japanese at the time. We figured, from all the propaganda we got about

them, they couldn't see and all that, and sometimes it turned out that way, but they were good tenacious fighters. I didn't believe that we would spend that much time on it.

S: When you were at Indiantown Gap, when did you find out that you were headed for the Pacific?

J: Oh, not until three weeks after we got there. We went into pretty extensive training there. We went into firing a lot of live ammunition on the range. The first time I found out was when we changed our post office from New York, New York to San Francisco APO 37. But it was so close to Youngstown, we used to sneak back and come home every weekend. Every weekend was our last weekend.

S: You would sneak out?

J: Oh, yes. We would get a pass. We had pretty good men up there. They understood what was going on. We would come home; half the camp was gone every weekend. The people, most of them, were from Youngstown, Canton, or Cleveland. The turnpike never got so much traffic. (Laughter) I mean it! I hitchhiked. Once, I rode from Harrisburg on a truck, a wide open car carrier, in March and it was cold as hell! I had a big old army overcoat on. I was standing on the back and holding on for dear life. Usually, I went from Harrisburg to Irwin, Pennsylvania, on the other side of Pittsburgh, and then took a street car through Pittsburgh and bummed a ride from there to Youngstown. That's every weekend, booze it up a little bit. Live it up!

S: When you loaded your equipment onto the flat cars, did you help in that when you went to San Francisco?

J: Yes, in fact I was in charge of loading the equipment. We got it all loaded, put it on cars, and then we came down by train.

S: Did you have to do anything special to the equipment, like take off serial numbers or . . .

J: We had a code number for our equipment, but I forget what the code number was. We had a number and all we did was stamp that number and mark all the equipment APO 37th San Francisco.

S: But did you have to take the division insignia off?

- J: There was no insignia whatsoever; we went by code number. I can't remember the number, I think it was 64 or something--I forget.
- S: When you got to San Francisco, where was the 135th quartered?
- J: In the International Harvester Building in Oakland across the Bay Bridge.
- S: How many men did the 135th have in it? And how many field pieces?
- J: We had twelve field pieces and an anti-tank platoon, which is four or six--I can't recall exactly--37 millimeter antitank guns. There were three firing batteries, a service battery, and a headquarters battery. There would have been approximately close to--we were never up to full strength--about 750 men.
- S: Did you ever go out on the town in San Francisco?
- J: Oh yes, you better believe it.
- S: Top of the Mark?
- J: No, that was off limits for enlisted men. I went to Chinatown. Yes, we boozed it up pretty good down there before we went over. We had some good times down there.
- S: How long were you there?
- J: Not very long. I was there about three weeks, at the most.
- S: Getting back to Camp Shelby for just a second, what was the reaction of the people of, say, Hattiesburg Mississippi, to the presence of the Army there?
- J: I think they treated us pretty good. I know, we used to go on weekend trips by truck, and then the people were very good. I went to Natchez one weekend and we pulled into the high school there and people were waiting there to register you and take you into their home for the weekend. They just dined you and everything else. They were really good; they were really nice people.
- S: They didn't have any harsh feelings that you were a Yankee?

- J: No animosity, but we would banter back and forth. When I was down in Natchez or Vicksburg they would take me out and show me the battle field over there. They got a big kick out of that. They liked to show me where the Yankees were buried. But I thought of that, they're good people. I had nothing against them; they had nothing against us.
- S: What kind of impression do you think the 135th left on the town of Hattiesburg? Did you ever get in any trouble down there?
- J: No, I think we left a good impression. I think the whole division did. Well, you had a few misfits that screwed up, but outside of that, we left a good impression, I think.
- S: You said you weren't in San Francisco very long, then you boarded the transports. Can you remember what transports?
- J: You better believe it, the S. S. Uruguay.
- S: Was it a big ship?
- J: Yes, it was a liner. It was a Matson Liner. It belonged to Matson, whoever they were at the time.
- S: Matson?
- J: M-A-T-S-O-N, Matson liner. When we went on the high seas the Battle of Midway took place. Going over, all we had were three transports; I can't remember the other two, but I think one was the Coolidge. Yes, one was the Coolidge.
- S: How about the James Parker? Does that ring a bell?
- J: No, that was a Liberty Ship if I am not mistaken. We went all over the Pacific. Look how long it took us-- twenty days or so, and we went to New Zealand.
- S: Auckland, New Zealand?
- J: Yes!
- S: Did you know the Battle of Midway was taking place while you were . . .
- J: Not at the time, no. We didn't know. I am pretty

sure it was Midway. That was in 1942, right? The Midway? I know there was some battle for we could see flashes over the horizon. We had a cruiser and two destroyers as our escort and they left us. And we picked up the H.M.S. Leander We picked him up outside of New Zealand, and they took us in.

S: Did any men get seasick?

J: Oh, quite a few.

S: How about you?

J: No, hell no! Like I say, I was no panty-waste to begin with. And I never ate so many hard-boiled eggs, or eggs and fish in my life as I did on that ship. Two meals a day and you got eggs or fish. I managed to get some roast duck.

S: How did you manage that?

J: I saw these cooks cooking, roasting this duck down in the oven there and I knew it wasn't for us. I put a couple of greasy ducks under my shirt and got back to my quarter and man we ate duck. You had to if you wanted to eat good. I'll never forget that.

S: Was there fear of being torpedoed by submarines?

J: Yes, yes there was.

S: In other words, what restrictions did you have once you were on deck?

J: Well we were allowed to stay on deck at night, but no smoking. Smoking was out, no lights and no open port holes. And it was hot--when you went down below deck you had 36 people to a one or two-man state room.

S: Describe the interior of the ship, what was it like? You said it was a passenger liner, was some of the elegance still there?

J: Oh yes, a big dining hall area. You had your wide staircase going down into the ball room which was converted into the eating area; and all they did was put up a bunch of flat tables. You never sat down when you ate, there were no chairs, you stood and ate. Some of the elegance was there but the state rooms, everything was torn out and they put bunks up.

S: How many cots to a stateroom?

J: From what I saw, there were thirty-six bunks to a two-person stateroom, a regular stateroom. They were four high with no room to move around in, and you had a bathtub, but salt water to take a bath in. All that did was make you dirtier.

S: What kind of reception did you get in New Zealand?

J: Very good. We were issued our new helmets just before we went overseas. We landed there for the first time with these helmets on, I think half of them thought we were Germans--I swear to God! But I know from our ship, we had a fellow named Cook who was from our battalion. He was the first to land because of Captain Cook, the explorer. He was the first to land and they had a little reception out on the harbor there while the rest of them watched on. We marched through New Zealand. Trail arms, boy, I'll never forget that. We never got the order to shoulder arms. We went to a little place called Opahake, farmers yard.

S: Can you spell that, Opahake?

J: O-P-A-H-A-K-E, Opahake. It was outside of . . . I forget how many miles from Auckland. The train we rode there was a narrow gauge with benches along the side, wooden benches. I got a splinter in my . . . When we got there, we marched from the railroad siding, no the station, and went into a farmer's yard and set up camp. The New Zealanders had some old tents. To me they looked like those little round circus tents. We lived in them for awhile, with the manure. The captian wanted us to police the area. A farmer came out at us with his shotgun and shouted, "You leave it stay, you leave it stay. That's my fertilizer. I'll pick it up."

They started building huts for us there, four man huts, little huts. The New Zealanders were some people, they were beautiful people, but the carpenters we had building these huts would come at eight o'clock and have tea. One man spent all day stoking the fire and cooking tea. Ten o'clock they would have tea, twelve o'clock they would have tea, two o'clock they would have tea, and four o'clock they went home. Oh boy--but we got our huts built anyway. (Laughter)

S: How long were you in New Zealand?

- J: Not very long, I can't recall, three or four weeks. Then we got called out. We had to go load our own ship. From there we went on the Coolidge to Fiji. The dock workers were on strike at the time so we loaded our own ships.
- S: The dock workers were on strike during the war?
- J: Yes, at that time, yes. We went down and loaded the ships ourselves.
- S: Were you allowed passes to go into Auckland?
- J: Yes, we went to Auckland, and it was beautiful. The first Sunday I was there, I got a pass and I went to Auckland. I went to mass in a big cathedral I picked out that was way up on top of a hill. It was one of the most beautiful churches I was in. The priest was over there, the bishop was over there too and he told the people we were mostly from Ohio. Over 75 percent were Catholics like we were, and they treated us good. They were really nice people.
- S: Did they seem to enjoy your presence? Were they overjoyed that you were there?
- J: Oh, they were happy, the people were happy.
- S: Were they afraid of invasion, do you think?
- J: I think so, they were all afraid of it down there because at that time all their troops were in Africa, I guess. They had nobody, they were the home guard. They were real happy that we got down there. We were the first troops to land. We did a bit of training. We played football with the New Zealanders down there. They beat us in football but we beat them in rugby. Believe it or not.
- S: Seems to me it should have been the opposite.
- J: Yes.
- S: Did you date any girls there?
- J: Quite a few, quite a few.
- S: Did you leave them heartbroken? (Laughter)
- J: Well, some of them I probably did, but they didn't



really give me a chance to leave them heartbroken, we weren't there long enough. Oh, a funny thing about the people down there, you would go to a dance, be talking to a beautiful girl until she opened her mouth. I guess it was the calcium down there. Their teeth, twenty years old, half of them were rotten. I couldn't understand that. Beautiful, nice people. New Zealand it's a beautiful country, like out west, like Montana, a nice place.

S: Do you remember which ship you went over to Fiji in?

J: The Coolidge.

S: The Coolidge?

J: The Coolidge, yes. It took us three or four days to get to Fiji, then we unloaded at Fiji.

S: Can you remember where you unloaded at?

J: Suva, Suva Harbor. That's the capitol of Fiji and we went to Camp Samabula for awhile. That was the name of the camp and don't ask me how to spell it. It was a New Zealand camp.

S: Were there any New Zealand troops there?

J: Yes, there were a few there. We relieved them. After we got there, we took over and they left us, I don't know, they scattered them around. But I think the best time I had overseas was in Suva. We weren't there more than a week when Byers and myself, he's from Prairie Junction, Ohio, got orders to take over a house in Suva, so he and I moved in there. While the rest of the camp was going through all that rigmarole, we were over there living in a big house on a hill. We cleaned it up and it eventually ended up as our battalion headquarters. We lived it up for about three weeks. It was really good -- electric cook stove and electric lights. The rest of the outfit was living in the jungle. I enjoyed that. I met some nice people there.

S: Did you meet any natives? What were the natives like?

J: Well the natives are a beautiful race of people. They had bushy hair and light features. They were real nice, always singing. Nicest people I ever met.

S: Did you train any of them as soldiers?

J: We worked with the Fiji battalion for awhile but we didn't train them. They were trained by their own officers plus New Zealanders. They had their own battalion over there, the Fiji Battalion. We worked with them, during the war, on Bougainville. In Fiji, we never worked with them except one time we went on a problem and we were supposed to stop them from infiltrating our areas. No way could we stop them.

S: They were that good?

J: They were that good! I mean, no way could we stop them. All they did was, with a piece of chalk, mark where they were at. The guys would find chalk marks on their ass, on their pants and on their shoes, and never even knew they were there. They were really good.

S: What did you do when you were on the Fiji's? What was the division's function?

J: My function, my job, well we trained, we trained in jungle warfare. Mainly my work was building a defensive perimeter and caves. We built caves all through that island, and tunnels.

S: For defensive purposes? Was there fear that the Japanese were going to attack?

J: At that time it was the first line of defense. That's when I first learned to use dynamite. Frank Fatich, a kid in my outfit was an old bootleg coal miner from around Johnstown, he knew how to use dynamite like crazy. He was teaching me to use dynamite and we would blast into those coral hills. It was all solid and maybe in a week's time we might get through, maybe a foot. We dug into the hills though, building caves and so forth.

S: Did you practice firing artillery?

J: Yes, I went out, like I said I was forward observer, and called in the shots. We had a firing range out there and we went out and fired. But the main work there was starting to look throughout the mountains and throughout the hills, for any invasion troops coming in, and guard duty, building defensive perimeters, and so forth. We had three lines of defense already built before we left there.

S: What was the climate like? What was the terrain like?

- J: In Fiji? The interior was mountainous. It was jungle, but it had beautiful beaches. It was better than what came after, I'll tell you that.
- S: Looking back, after you had been through New Georgia and Bougainville, do you think that the jungle training you got on the Fiji's helped you?
- J: Oh yes, definitely. Over here in the states, we trained mostly in Louisiana, on maneuvers and down through Mississippi. That helped a lot because there were a lot of swamps there. Our first jungle training came in Fiji and then after that in Guadalcanal we still trained. We got to know the jungles.
- S: Was there any diseases there?
- J: Oh yes, yes, elephantiasis, dengue fever. In Fiji there was no malaria.
- S: What was the fever?
- J: Dengue Fever in Fiji.
- S: Dengue fever, how do you spell that, do you know?
- J: D-E-N-G-U-E, I guess, I don't know. And elephantiasis, you would see a guy walking around, you know . . .
- S: Was there a lot of that?
- J: Oh yes, quite a bit of elephantiasis from what I had seen. But you had different fevers.
- S: Would you say that this was a period where they weeded out the people who couldn't make it on New Georgia and Bougainville?
- J: Yes, they had a lot of rotations, but we had a cadre. You could see the men that went back to the states. They were supposed to be hand picked better men to train over here [the United States] but they kept the better ones over [in the South Pacific]. They knew what they were doing.
- S: Who was your commander at this time?
- J: At that time in Fiji, it was Captain Arby G. DeCamp, he is from around Columbus. We drank it up over at the reunion last year. He is a retired colonel and he's hard of hearing like me too. He is a pretty nice guy now, he isn't like he was over there!  
(Laughter)

S: Did you have personal contact with him over there!

J: Oh yes, because of my job, I had more personal contact with the officers than with anybody else. I told them to go to hell in lots of ways, all of them, at one time or another. I don't know, they were all right. They weren't like in the stories my father told me about the officers they had over in the old country; none of them were like that. Most of them, before they got into the service, were either operating gasoline pumps or strictly National Guard officers. A lot of them turned out to be very, very nice. In other words, let's put it this way; we all went through the same training together. They learned by trying to tell us, and by doing it. But you would have to improvise in your training because nine times out of ten you figured, that bastard doesn't know what he's talking about.

S: So you sort of threw the rule book out the window when . . .

J: At times, yes, but we would usually use it. We went through obstacle courses and stuff like that. We built our own. A little humor over there--the first day the officers were supposed to go through this obstacle course, the first sergeant and I went out the night before and cut the rope that swung over the gully because we knew who the first officer going over would be. He never made it, oh, we fixed him good. But outside of that you had respect for rank, regardless. I had some wonderful officers over there.

S: How long did you stay in the Fijis?

J: About nine months I think. No, let's see, eight months--seven or eight months.

S: Then you went to Guadalcanal. Can you remember what ship you went over on?

J: Penn.

S: The Penn?

J: William Penn. That was an AKA.

S: What is an AKA?

J: That's an Attack Cargo Transport or something, a personal carrier. I am pretty sure it was a Liberty Ship.

S: Actually, the Battle of Guadalcanal was over when you got there, is that correct?

J: Yes, we went to set up camp and went in for more training.

S: Where did you set up camp?

J: The first place was Matanikaw. It was a holy mess. Every night trees would fall. They were shelled during the shelling, and they got weak and they would fall. They got quite a few casualties from that. That was the only casualties that we had, plus the mosquitoes and malaria. That's when we started getting malaria.

J: What is Atabrine?

S: Atabrine, that was a little yellow pill. I don't know whether I have any more. I would give you one, you could take. (Laughter) No, I got them somewhere. It was a little pill we took. It was a substitute for quinine. Originally it was a dye made by I. G. Farber. Germany came out with that, and we got a hold of it. I studied that pill. It was the most bitter pill I ever took. We got a hold of it and found out that it was a good substitute, a preventive more or less. It wasn't as good as quinine.

S: Did it have any effect on your skin color or anything?

J: Yes, we all looked like Japs down there. It turned you yellow, sort of yellowish. They said it could affect your sex life. Yes, it did, but I don't know, I have five kids. A lot of guys wouldn't take it, but when you got to the chow line, they forced you to take it. An officer would scratch your name off, and they used to pop the pills in your mouth so they could make sure that you took them.

S: What did you do on Guadalcanal?

J: We went into more training, field practice, and firing. That's where we fired our 37s, anti-tank guns. We used canisters in them.

S: What is canister?

J: Canister is like a shotgun shell. Shoot that son of a gun out and it spreads. There were little balls, kind of like bearings [ball bearings] in there maybe

about a quarter of an inch and they would scatter. It was like a shotgun shell.

S: And that was to be used against troops?

J: Troops, good effect. But down there I had a job of clearing out booby traps with an army sergeant, John Churchura. He was from Michigan.

S: These were American booby traps or did they use Japanese?

J: Yes, these the Marines set out, but they were never plotted. We had an idea where they were. It was up to John and I to go out and gather them up, most of them, and blow what we could and if the pins were too far out, we would just attach lines to them and blow them up. This was close to the native village.

S: How many would you say you cleared out?

J: About a thousand of them at least. A lot of them I saved. I would go up over the hill and practice throwing hand grenades just for the hell of it.

S: Was it a dangerous job?

J: Well yes, if you tripped over a wire. You had to be careful. You had to watch.

S: Were they hard to spot?

J: Most of the brush was grown over and they were pretty hard to spot. It was like looking for mushrooms in the winter time. But we did pretty good. We cleared them out and we never got hurt. Then we would go out on problems with different outfits. I went out with, I think it was, the 2nd Marine Division a few times as an artillery observer, strictly for training purposes.

S: What was your impression of the Guadalcanal landscape, the terrain after the battle? Was there a lot of wreckage?

J: Oh yes, a lot of skeletons and bones laying around and unburied Japanese, and rotting holes. There were a lot of dumps that were around, like food dumps, and ammunition dumps, and so forth. They were scattered all over the island. I don't know, to me it didn't seem that there was too much organization in the beginning; stuff was too scattered.

S: Were there any Japanese up on the island?

J: Oh, there were a few. There were a few in the back of the hills. They would come in and sneak into the kitchens at night and steal food. But they didn't bother us, so we didn't bother them.

S: Who was "Washing Machine Charlie"?

J: It was an airplane. It would come over every night and drop a bomb or two, just to keep us awake.

S: Did anybody ever get hurt from those raids?

J: No, he must have had bad eyes or something. I don't think so. It was more or less of a nuisance. That went on there, New Georgia and Bougainville. I don't know if it was the same guy, but I doubt it.

S: Did you have any heavy air raids?

J: We had a big air raid there in April. I forget how many planes, but the sky was loaded with planes. It was suicide. I was standing out on the hill just watching them shoot them down. It was really something.

S: Who was shooting them down, the American Airforce?

J: Yes, it was the Airforce, the Navy. They had an outfit called COMAIRSOL. It was a combined air . . . something or other, in the South Pacific and there were New Zealanders, Navy, Army, and Marine planes. It was a good outfit, they did good. They worked together. They shot those planes out of the sky. I think it happened after Yamamoto got shot down in Bougainville and was sort of a retaliatory raid.

S: They were mad?

J: They were mad, and it didn't work out like that.

S: They got even madder?

J: Yes, oh yes. But what could they do, we were on the offensive then, see.

S: How about naval shelling at night, did you have any of that?

J: No, I never went through that. I never went through naval shelling. Maybe it was because we were further

in [land]. Our artillery outfit was further in the jungle.

S: Were you anywhere near Henderson Field?

J: Well, yes, we were down quite a ways from Henderson. I've been to Henderson Field, I went down there, but we were about four or five miles away from there. But we did, after New Georgia, come back and we were right next to the bomber strip. What the hell is the name of that? Mitchell Field? I forget the name of the bomber strip, but we were close to there. We did get a lot of air raids.

S: While you were there, did you meet any veterans of the Guadalcanal campaign and did you ask them questions such as: What is it like?

J: Yes, I met most of them in Fiji, that was from the Americal Division. They came over and they were relieved. They came over to take our area and we went to Guadalcanal. I talked to a lot of them and they gave us lectures on the fighting over there. We had critiques and they explained how the Japs thought and so forth. We learned a lot from them.

S: They were helpful?

J: Oh yes, very helpful. A lot of them were scary.

S: What stories did they tell you?

J: How sneaky the Japanese were and you never knew where they were going to be. But we had to find out for ourselves most of the time because a lot of it was a lot of horse shit. In fact, maybe some of these guys that came to tell us these stories weren't even in combat. Yes, that happens.

S: Did you ever go to Tulagi?

J: No, no, I stayed on the main island, Guadalcanal.

S: Can you tell me what "torpedo juice" is or "raisin jcks"?

J: Torpedo juice, believe it or not, is ethyl alcohol. Medical alcohol is what it is and I know first hand about that. We would go down to the Navy down there, and they had a hex fitting on the torpedo where this alcohol was put in, and I made sure I had a wrench to fit it.



We would open it up and drain a gallon or two of that stuff out. Maybe that is why our borpédos weren't so good--didn't have enough juice in them. We would drink it and we would mix it with grapefruit juice, canned grapefruit, oh, beautiful drink. I could have a shot right now.

S: How long did you stay on Guadalcanal?

J: We got there in February and we left in June. We went to New Georgia because they were having trouble over there. The 43rd Division went over there and got into a little trouble so we went over there.

S: When did you find out you were going to New Georgia?

J: We were on the alert when they first invaded. We figured we would go there but we weren't sure. We didn't know what they were saving us for because . . .

S: Were you ready?

J: Oh, we were ready. In fact, I think at the time, we were over trained. Do you know what I mean--just over-trained.

S: Do you think the officers sensed this? Did you have any USO shows just to loosen you up a little bit maybe?

J: Well, we had movies. We had, I think, Blackstone the Magician and some character actor, but I can't think of his name right now. Anyhow, he did put on a pretty good show. I never saw any women down there, they didn't have them yet. In fact, we didn't know what they were at the time.

S: How long did it take to load a ship with the artillery pieces?

J: I don't know. I never loaded them. They didn't take long. Everything was down to a system. It worked out good. They knew what they were doing and it didn't take long and unloading took less time than loading.

When we went to New Georgia, our first combat was in New Georgia. We had LST's, and all this stuff on them, and they just rolled it right off the ship. Long Slow Target is what they called it. And we had LCI's, Landing Craft Infantry, which pulled right up to the beach. The men got right off.

S: Tell me about New Georgia, what did you do, where were you at . . .

J: The first job I got in New Georgia was artillery observer for the 161st Infantry, which wasn't in our division. I went up to support them. We got up to a place called Biblo Hill. I sat up there, I got my call to fire direction, I got my base points, I got everything checked in and I knew where I was going to fire. We sat on that hill for about three days. We knew the Japs were down there and we could hear them, but we sat there and they didn't want us to move at all. They didn't want them to know that we were there. In fact, I don't think they knew we were there.

S: If you were in the outpost were you ever ahead of the infantry?

J: At times, yes. I hit the beach first after we took Munda Airfield. I'll tell you about that later on. We got up on this hill and the 148th had to swing, they were on our right flank, but they couldn't swing it through. I think that is when Rodger Young got killed. When they came through the "Nips" followed them and we had one hell of a battle.

S: Could you see the battle going on?

J: I was right in the middle of it. I was calling my shots. We were bringing that artillery down.

S: Describe that.

J: What?

S: The battle itself, describe what was going on: what you did. Did you have a radio with you?

J: I had a radio, and I had a telephone, and I had a little switchboard, a four line switchboard. There was a line to the CP / Command Post 7 of the infantry, and a line to battalion in the artillery command post, and one to the division for artillery fire. As soon as the "Nips" hit, they came sneaking in and I would start dropping fire on them.

S: 105s?

J: 105s. It wasn't too bad down there, there weren't that many down there to come hitting us. Bougainville is where I used 155s. They were sneaky, artillery was more or less used to keep them down. It was more or

less close contact fighting: Hand to hand, and knives, and even brass knuckles, and grenades. Grenades were a lifesaver because if you fired a rifle at night you threw a flash and the "Nips" knew where you were at. They would infiltrate and actually sneak into your hole.

S: Was there a lot of infiltration?

J: There was three of us in this one big hole one night and we got up in the morning and the guy in the middle was dead. He was knifed, he was bayoneted! I never knew what happened! What scared you most down there was that they had these land crabs you thought were Japs moving around. The son of a bitches were all over the area and they were about this big. I guess they would come to the edge of the hole and start to fall in and maybe they got panicky and started scratching with their claws and throwing dirt in your face. And you started stabbing with your knife like crazy. If you would get them, it was like a skunk! As soon as you stabbed that son of a gun he stunk like hell, so you would throw it out of the hole and nine out of ten times it would land in another hole. Some guy would scream. Oh, it was terrible--you had the elements to fight.

S: What was the terrain like?

J: The terrain was hilly, mountains, swamp, and jungle.

S: How far could you see in front of you?

J: After a bombing run or after you cleared a field of fire, you could see maybe a hundred or two hundred yards but before that you couldn't see five feet. It is strictly just like, how the hell could I explain? Did you see a grape arbor? Try to go through one of them. That is what it is like.

S: Let's describe the artillery itself, what type of shell was used? How heavy was the shell?

J: I don't know. I forget. I think they were twenty five, I figure on twenty five. I forget what they were. Like I say, I wasn't in the firing battery. But we used HE, that is high explosive, and I think we had a shell like a shrapnel.

S: Would you call individually for different types of shells when you were . . .

J: Different targets. HE was used on pill boxes to blast them open.

S: I mean when you were in your forward observers post, would you see that there was a pill box here or there and you would call the artillery in? Would you specify a higher explosive?

J: Yes, HE. And you would try to bust it open, which was almost impossible. Most of the pill boxes were taken by hand. The trick to that was to try to get some grenades in there and when they didn't work you would get some white phosphorous, that is a smoke grenade, and you would throw that in there and it would get them out.

S: Smoke them out?

J: Yes, and that phosphorous would burn like hell. That was not new doing. I think we used more white phosphorous shells than hand grenades. The idea was to sneak up on them and to get a good shot and get the grenade in the pill box. We fought some good troops down there, big ones.

S: Imperial Marines?

J: I think they were. They were fanatics. They didn't give up. Toward the end, after we got down to the beach, I was moving along with my crew. I had four men. I had a kid from Virginia, Carpenter was his name. We called him Egghead because the shape of his head looked like an ostrich egg. When he wore his helmet he couldn't wear the liner; it /his head/ was so big. I tell you, he looked funny and he had that old southern drawl. And when we got down to the beach, which was our objective, we moved right down and we just went ahead of the infantry. There was a supply depot all shot to hell. /On the beach/ he leaned his gun against a coconut tree, and he was looking out there rubbing his belly, and he looked down the beach and here comes a Japanese platoon like on dress parade. This man kept yelling, "Where's the infantry, where's the infantry? We ain't supposed to be fighting. Where's the infantry?" Well they heard him and scattered. We had a hell of a time getting them out of the jungle, but we finally got them. Carpenter fell in a shell hole, Japs were running all around him, and he was sinking up to his neck. Today it is funny, I guess the man was praying like hell in that hole.

S: What was actual combat like? Did it seem like it was real at first?

J: Actually, we were waiting for it for so long that it didn't phase us too much. But after you got shot at a couple of times, you were scared as hell. Don't tell me not every man gets scared! You were scared, you didn't know what to do, whether to panic or run, fight or what. Then you thought about it, well you have the same chance that man did who was shooting at you.

S: Did you ever come face to face with a Japanese?

J: Later in the Philippines, yes, but down there the only face I saw was a dead one. I've seen them live coming at me, but it didn't take long before they were dead.

S: Did you actually shoot any yourself?

J: Oh, yes.

S: I am reading here an award of the Silver Star, it says, "Stephen H. Javorsky, Sergeant Field Artillery, United States Army, for gallantry in action at Bougainville, Solomon Islands, on March 12, 1944, playing a large part in repulsing an enemy attack on Hill 700. He wiped out a machine gun position with hand grenades and killed one Japanese and wounded two others with rifle fire. He then braved heavy hostile fire to help three wounded comrades to the cover of his own foxhole. Sergeant Javorsky's courageous actions protected the only communications in the vicinity and enabled a vitally needed artillery observation post to remain in operation." That is from A. J. Barnett who is a Major General, Chief of Staff. That came straight from the headquarters of the United States Army in the South Pacific Area. So I guess you did see direct action.

J: Oh yes, quite a bit. Quite a bit after that. This was after New Georgia, after that all we did was set up perimeters. I went to an island called Rouiana where our guns were. Our guns were placed on this little island, and what they would do is fire from that island up to the main island of New Georgia and firing into Munda which was the airfield.

S: Was that the objective of the New Georgia Campaign?

J: Yes, Munda the airfield, that is what we had to take and it took longer than they anticipated. In fact, they just sent the one division in there. I think it was the

43rd. One of the regiments panicked, so then they brought us in along with the 35th Division. It took longer than they figured it would take, but we finally took it.

S: Were there a lot of casualties?

J: Yes, there were a few. In one instance, they were down at a place called Laiana Beach. We had a lot of casualties. They would use that beach to take them off, take them to Rendova to a hospital. The Japanese infiltrated that, and they were actually killing our wounded before we could move them out. I wasn't there, but from the intelligence report that I read, they raised hell down there. Another place I was, was on Biblo Hill where we had an aid station set up. We had doctors there. The doctors, at the time, were cutting scrapnel fragments out of these wounded when they opened up a machine gun fire, and just knocked the shit right out of that aid station. I mean there was no such thing as the Geneva Convention! No matter who you were, they fought. In fact, medics carried rifles. They had no respect for the Red Cross, or anybody.

S: Did that bother you that the Japanese were, so called, dirty fighters?

J: Yes, it scared the shit out of me! I vowed right then, in my first action, that if I was ever caught or surrounded, I would never give up. I would have to fight to the end because of the stories we heard about them, and the death march back in the Philippines. We heard stories about the death march. I don't think they were one hundred percent true. They did a lot of atrocities. They claimed that they used to behead our flyers when they were shot down and so forth, torture them and all that. We were so full of that propaganda, or whatever it was, I don't think any American ever gave up, after the Philippines that is.

S: What can you tell me about the guys that were with you in the OP Observation post?

J: Best men I ever had, no matter who they were, good men.

S: Did you have to have some special qualifications for being an OP?

J: Well, you have got to be stupid for one thing. You should have a little mathematics, and you got to have a

perspective of distance. After you've done it awhile you get pretty good at it.

S: Did you find that your own artillery would try to zero in on Japanese OPs? Were you a prime target?

J: Do you mean our artillery or their artillery?

S: Were you a target for their artillery and were their OPs a target for ours? Did they have any artillery?

J: They had artillery. Some of them were very good. They had a gun, a "seventy-seven." It was a dual purpose gun, and it was one hell of a gun.

S: Did your artillery get into any artillery duels with them.

J: In the Philippines we did and down there in Bougainville we did, but in New Georgia there wasn't too much artillery dueling because we had our ships out in the bay area firing.

S: Did you ever coordinate air strikes with the artillery barrage?

J: No, I had air/ground liaison and maybe when I called it back in it was down at fire direction where they send the planes out. I can't recall talking to a pilot myself. When things got tough they [airplanes] were over there. We didn't use napalm until later on, but they came down with everything close-in. We got real close-in support from the Air Force.

S: Tell me, once you found where a pill box was, did you really lay everything you had on that?

J: No. You could almost tell what you need on there. You would throw a couple of rounds in there. If you had a concentration of enemy troops, then you would lay it in.

S: Everything you had?

J: Everything I had. Twelve guns, and if you need more I would get the 155s out. The 136th Heavy Artillery would come in with their big howitzers.

S: For troop concentration, would you use high explosives or would you use shrapnel shells?

J: I don't know really. I don't think we used shrapnel,

it was a anti-personnel shell, and we used that. It was a shrapnel all right.

S: Did you ever see any result of your work?

J: Oh yes, because we had to follow through. It's not pretty.

S: Artillery can be gruesome.

J: Yes, it's a pretty terrible weapon, but it's a necessary one.

S: After the battle of New Georgia was completed, where did you go?

J: Back to Guadalcanal for a rest, believe it or not, and to unload ships.

S: What did you do?

J: Me, well at that time I was a buck sergeant and I was in charge of details. I didn't do very much if I could help it.

S: Did you get replacements?

J: We got replacements. Our first replacements came to us when we were at Indiantown Gap. In Shelby they broke us up because there was too many people getting killed from one town. We got replacements in "the Gap" and we got replacements in Fiji when we sent the cadre home. We kept getting replacements right along as we needed them, but we never did get enough to bring us up to full strength, the whole division. I think the best strength at any one time was maybe sixty or seventy percent. We never had a full complement of men, that's the whole division, but we had enough to operate. But then we, like I say, went to Guadalcanal and loaded ships and started loading for the invasion of Bougainville which happened November 1st. I forget what date in 1943. We went in with the 3rd Marines; they were on the right and we were on the left. We moved right in to what they call the army lines, set up a perimeter, defensive line, and never had a casualty, and never had any opposition landing in Bougainville. We set up, we dug in, we built the airfield, and the Marines had a little action on our right and then they were relieved by the "Americal" Division. That left two of our divisions with anti-aircraft support and the Seabees came in and built that airfield. Man, I tell you, in



no time at all, you never seen anything like it. They had the airfield operating, and we had ole "Pappy" Boyington's outfit over there, and it was some job.

S: Was he there himself? Did you ever see him?

J: Oh yes. We went down to trade booze with those people, sell them souvenirs for booze. We set up our Army lines and it was strictly patrol duty because there was no opposition, but we knew from captured documents, and everything, that they were going to hit our lines, but where, we didn't know exactly. So we kept patrols out and gathered information and tried to get a prisoner and so forth. They finally hit us in March. I was up on Hill 700 at the time. I had an OP jutting out on a finger, nose of a hill. I had a tree, a BC scope up in a tree, and I spotted them out there and they hit us. It was like cutting wheat! We had barbed wire strung, double aprons and everything, but it seemed as though--well every soldier will tell you this--they are after you and you alone.

It wasn't until the battle was over that we found out they were after our OP. They had it pinpointed, they had it spotted, and they knew exactly where it was. That's where I got the Silver Star, fighting like hell with pants full of shit, too! I'll tell you, it was hell, you kept firing and firing. I fired but I had two buddies.

S: What kind of rifle did you have there?

J: I had a carbine at the time. I burnt one out after 75 rounds; if you fire too fast you burn it out. Then I picked up a Thompson submachine gun, and I got one round out of that and it jammed. Whoever had it before me, put 55 rounds in there and I had a beautiful time. They were coming up that nose and, man, I could have really got them. I could have had fifteen or twenty of them. It jammed and then I picked up a rifle I had, an .03 rifle there. That son of a gun had a rifle grenade on it and I didn't know. I hit a tree not too far in front of me and it blew up, and I said, "Oh Christ, they're throwing artillery at me." All the battles were artillery battles. We brought that artillery, I'd say, maybe twenty-five or thirty feet in front of our hole. They were coming up with Bangalore torpedos, that's a pole charge, a big, maybe twelve foot pole loaded with explosives. The idea is to shove it in a hole or shove it in a pill box and blow it up. But we did pretty good. There was a "thirty-seven" firing

canister on our left and it cleared a good field of fire. That's when I went out and picked up the guys that were hurt. It was hell, it was hell, you were so scared. They hit us at 4:20 in the morning, I'll never forget, it lasted until 6:30 and they kept coming. I forget how many. Well, they counted, in front of our hole alone, 87 Japs /killed/ by hand grenades and rifle fire, 87 Japs, within maybe twenty-five yards of the hole, our pill box.

S: Did they come right up to your hole?

J: Well, one of them had his hands in. We had what they call a communication trench between holes and one of them had his hand over the side. The old lieutenant blasted him with a "forty-five" and he was strictly an artillery observer. I'm out in the trench throwing grenades and he's telling me over to the left ten yards, over to the right. Yes, when they set up their machine guns it was right by a banyan tree, and that's where, I swear, I hit that son of a bitch right on the helmet. When they hit us this morning yes all had diarrhea, dysentery, and all that, and I had to really go. I told the old man, I was on guard, "I got to go take a crap." He says, "Well go up there, the latrine on the hill." It was sitting too prominent. I said, "I don't know, I don't know whether I should sneak up there at night." That's when they hit us. I had that peaked cap, that forage cap, and I set it down on a box of grenades and I shit in that hat. I stayed there until the old man told me to go out and start throwing grenades down. When I reached down on that second box, I put my hand in and I got that cap and it was full of crap. I just pulled the pin out /of the grenade/ and dropped it in the hat and threw it. That is when, I swear to God, I hit that Japanese, with the machine gun, right on the head.

S: And you got the machine gun next?

J: Yes, that is when I got the machine gun. I wiped them out, there were three of them there.

S: You said you rescued two or three . . .

J: Yes, they were out in the trench--you know there was a lot of brave men, maybe they're nuts, but they get out there and they'll fire from the top of the pill box, stand out in the open, or get down there and get in close and start firing and they were hit. I heard this one guy out there moaning; and I'm through with my grenades already; I'm firing my rifle . . .

S: Do you remember where he was hit at?

J: One of them was hit in the leg and the other two I don't know, but one of them must have been hit in the jaw because his whole face was bloody. So what I did is--probably if I would have thought about it I wouldn't have gone after the guy, but that's your buddy, but I didn't even know the people, they were with the infantry--I went out and hauled them in my hole and got a medic over there, and in the morning they pulled them out. I brought three of them in. Well they were in and they could still move with their hands and so forth so we had them load ammunition for our clips because our ammunition was running out. We had them keep us supplied with ammunition. Like I say, them Japs were at our hole and we found out later, because we were raising so much hell with our artillery on them, they wanted to get that OP out and they knew exactly where we were.

S: How did you know, did you find out how they knew?

J: I don't know what happened. For a couple of months they were on the other side of the island, there were over eighty thousand of them over there. They sent this Japanese 6th Division, which was the division that raped China in 1939 or 1940, over and they hand carried all their artillery up over these mountains. It was all hand carried and they would bring it up and bury it and go back and get more. So finally they set it up, and the first inclining we had that they had artillery over there was when they started shelling the airfield. That's when we had our counter artillery fire. We started shelling them and when actual fighting came their artillery was shot--they had no more. We absolutely knocked them out. That was at the Battle of Hill 700, which actually lasted, in the long run, six or seven days. Every day you had a fire fight. They actually did take some of our pill boxes and used some of our men for sandbags and their own dead.

Well we finally got them back and they didn't take that many. Their purpose was to get us off that hill, to get us out of that area, and move in and take the airfield, and use our rations. They were told that all the food they wanted in the world was over on our side; all they had to do was go and get it. But they didn't get it. Over on our left flank was the 129th Infantry. I was with the 145th at the time, and they had what they called Numa Numa trail down there. When the Japs

hit, I don't know what their thinking was, but they would hit you here, two, three, or four times and if they couldn't move, they kept moving down. All they kept doing was losing men. Well, they hit the 129th, which was a hell of a battle down there, but with my OP I had a clear view of that. I pulled artillery fire in there and this one night I was throwing artillery down there like crazy. When I got back the old man told me that I spent a million dollars, a million dollar barrage I put down there. I covered one shell hole with another one. But we finally got them out of there. It took awhile; a lot of clean up.

S: How long would you say the longest artillery barrage that you called for lasted? A couple of hours?

J: A barrage? No, it wouldn't last that long, maybe a half an hour at the most.

S: How many shells would you say were fired?

J: A million dollars, I fired that one night.

S: Were you ever told that this stuff cost money, or that there is only so much of it?

J: Well yes. In Bougainville we had a problem because through sabotage, or what happened, an ammunition dump was blown up on Guadalcanal and that is where all our ammunition was coming from, Hell's Point Ammunition Dump. They just, I think it was sabotaged, blew the hell out of it and that's where all the ammunition was coming from. Now when we first hit Bougainville, I was restricted to four rounds a day.

S: Four rounds?

J: Four rounds per gun, twelve guns, that's forty-eight rounds. When I went up to observe for the Marines, this is when we first hit there, they wanted harassing fire sitting out all night. I told the man I couldn't give it to him. I told him what happened and I told him I could give him a round every now and then, fire one gun and maybe fire another. He didn't like it, but that's what I did. They got panicky up there and fired rifle fire all night. There were no Japanese out there and I knew it. What could you do? They raised hell with me and the old man came up, old General Kreber came up, and he chewed their ass out and pulled us out. Last time I worked with those Marines. I almost got court-martialed for not giving them fire. The old man gave me a pat on the shoulder and said,

"You did right, like that Hill 700, that was a hell of a battle."

I forget what we got over there. I think, after it was all over, about seventy-eight hundred, that's counting the left flank. And then the Americal got hit on the right, but that's a different division. Then after that we kept our perimeter in tact, the Japs pulled back, and our job was strictly patrols: combat patrols, ambush patrols, try to bring prisoners, and to set up road blocks.

S: The division was content just to . . .

J: To hold what we had. All we were there for mainly was to protect the airfield. From that airfield airplanes went out to Rabaul and neutralized that. That's where that old "Pappy" Boyington was, at that airfield. Men used to come down--you like these TV shows, did you ever see them, that's all chicken shit compared to that.

S: Really?

J: Yes, they used to come down to our kitchen because we had the best crap game on the island and they had money. They would come down, bring their bottles with them, and we would make sure we got them, and they would shoot dice with us. We had a lieutenant who was a "ninety-day wonder," just a kid. He frowned upon gambling. He came out--and actually I don't think he weighed 120 pounds--and chased them back to their outfit, honest to God. "Pappy" Boyington wasn't there, but his men were there gambling. They may have been good pilots but the little lieutenant scared the shit out of them. He actually ran them out.

S: After the battle itself was over, more or less, how long did you stay in Bougainville? I understand the beach area really turned into a resort.

J: Well yes, we built ball fields. Baseball was our main sport. We even had golf courses that we built over there. We had vegetable gardens. It was a little Ohio, more or less, without the snow. We got our snow every time the volcano would erupt a little bit. There was a volcano on the island and it would erupt and we would get a little fine ash coming down. It looked like snow, but it wouldn't melt; at 110 degrees in the shade--snow? But we built airfields and roads. Don't forget our General was director of highways for the

state of Ohio, Robert Beightler, so he knew how to build roads. In fact, the roads that he built, you have to give him credit, saved our ass in Bougainville because we had good supply routes to the front lines. They were disrupted and we always had our ammunition and food up there. It was the roads that they had the engineers build.

S: Did you have any buddies with you that you grew up with?

J: Yes, Nick LaVolpe; he was our cook, Joe Kostrewza; he had another section and was a forward observer--he died this past year in a "Vets" hospital--Rick Moore; he was more or less of an alcoholic but he was a hell of a soldier, Tom and Paul Amadio, Andy Paulson; well he left us in the states and ended up in Germany, Mike Kekish; I went to school with him at South, and the Lean boys, Ernie and Spike; I went to school with them; they were from my old neighborhood. Yes, quite a few.

S: What did you do for entertainment?

J: Chopped a coconut tree. They started to bring in USO shows, Bob Hope or Jack Benny, but every time a good show would come in, I would be up on a road block. I never got to see any of them. All the time I was in the South Pacific I wanted to see one particular movie, that was For Whom the Bell Tolls. I never did get to see it until I got home. It was always playing in some other area. I'll never forget that. Like I say, we had baseball teams--oh yes, we had one of the best baseball teams in the Pacific--softball and hardball. Then we had boxing matches. Nick LaVolpe in the beginning, beat the hell out of a heavy-weight champ of the South Pacific, but he fought in Bougainville and that was the first fight I ever saw him lose. I should have bet against him. He lost on decision, but he was a hell of a fighter. We had some good fights down there, good boxing.

S: Did you ever have the impression that, at least while the European theater was going on, maybe you were sort of the back door as far as supplies and that went?

J: No, we were too involved in what we were doing to pay any attention to what went on any place else. The thing that bugged us most was: When the hell are we going home. I had a chance to come home after I was

decorated down there from Bougainville, but after all that blood lust, I guess you would call it, you got use to it, killing people, and I turned it down because I knew we were going to make the invasion in the Philippines. Stupid, today, for me to have done that, but I did. I got to be a real soldier I guess.

S: When did you find out you were going to get the Silver Star?

J: They called me in and questioned me on what happened on the hill and I told them exactly what happened. In fact, I didn't know exactly what happened, but it was observed by other people who turned me in for it, the Silver Star. In fact, any decoration has to be verified by someone; it has to be eyewitnessed, more or less. When they told me that they put me in for than I thought, my God . . .

S: You must have been crazy?

J: No, I knew I was crazy at the time, but I figured that I should have gotten something better, maybe the DSC [Distinguished Service Cross]. I didn't realize what I had done until after I came out of service and I thought about it and I read about some of these other people getting what they got for what they did. I got cheated, but that's all right. Who cares, it is over with.

S: How long did you stay on Bougainville after the battle was over?

J: We left Bougainville in November 1944. We stayed there eleven months. I think it was eleven months or so, almost a year after we got there. It was an island paradise when we left. It was a slop hole when we got there. We had gardens that we turned over to the Australians. They came in and we turned it over to them and we started loading up for the Philippines. Actually in the Philippines where we were going to hit, we didn't know at the time.

S: But you knew you were going to the Philippines?

J: Yes, because everything was stepped up over there. They hit Leyte and Samar. When we heard that news, we knew that was where we were going and we loaded up. I had one of the best jobs in the world. They put me in charge of the beach. I was a beach

master, loading ships. I had ensigns under me. I had lieutenants under me, lieutenant commanders, and majors. I had one boss. He was an old army man, Colonel Kennel, Von Kennel. He was the only one I had to go to. To load ships we had to use dunnage and lumber. I cleared all the lumber on the island. I couldn't get anymore dunnage at the lumber mill; they had the mill set up and they ran out. My job was to start tearing down the quarters, the mess halls, and so forth. I started right where it should have been started; officers quarters went first. In fact, I got enough lumber out of there that I didn't have to bother the enlisted men. I had them lined up on that beach like the 25th MAG, that was Marine Airwing. They wanted to be loaded first; but I had my schedule, no way. I had people waiting out there for two or three days. I got my sweet revenge on a lot of people at that time.

My meals were brought down to my shack on the beach. I did lose my good pen my sister sent me for Christmas. It fell in the ocean, probably still floating down there. But we loaded up pretty good. We finally got it and we headed for the Philippines, and that took us . . .

S: Did you do any training?

J: We trained all the time. I mean you trained! Training was one thing you had to do. You didn't want to do it but you had to. At that time we were pretty good, we were veterans, we knew the score, but you had to train. Most of it was in road blocks and patrols and so forth, and so on. You were forever going out. We went down to this one area in Bougainville. We were going to locate three villages with code names, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. We came through this one area--you asked me before if I saw the results of my artillery fire--across the river, on the other side and stopped, and what I saw there is beyond description, dead Japanese! They would dig into the side of the hill with just enough space to get in there and would sit there. Half of them looked like gargoyles, but half of them looked alive. They were still holding their guns, but they were dead from concussion. Artillery just ripped the shit out of them! They were all over the area. I didn't count, but there must have been a couple thousand just where we dropped that artillery. They were terrible, half of them looked alive.



S: Not a mark on them?

J: Not a mark, it was the concussion that killed them.

S: Who would bury these people?

J: You say your father was in the band; he was one of them that buried them.

S: That is what the band members did?

J: The band members were medics and first aid men. They made riflemen out of them, and everybody did their job.

S: How did the Navy treat you on the transports going to the Philippines? I understand that you were on the transports for quite awhile.

J: I forget which one I was on. That's when I was on the William Allen going to the Philippines. Going to New Georgia I was on a LST. Coming back, I was on a destroyer. This ship I was on we had, he must have been, a submarine captian. He was a son of a bitch. I'll never forget his name. He had us scrubbing decks, changing clothes, man your boats, and sweeping. Finally we made a practice landing--I guess we were on ship about twenty days or so--at New Guinea and me and a couple other guys got together. General Kreber happened to be there and we went up and talked to him. We told him about the son of a bitch we had and what he was making us do. The sailors were sitting on their ass laughing at us, but we got that all straightened out. We got back and he said, "I'm in command of this part of the convoy, leave my men alone." The man never bothered us till we hit the Philippines. We got good food and everything after that. We never had to do another lick of duty on that ship. We could walk naked on that ship as far as that goes. He was a son of a bitch.

S: Did the convoy come under air attack?

J: Yes. Actually we went to the Admiralty Islands for New Years. We spent New Years on the islands and they gave us three cans of warm beer; that was it. Then we got back out and we headed for the Philippines. About two days out before the landing, we started getting a few air raids, but they didn't amount to much. D-Day, the day we landed, they came up at us with kamikazes and everything else.

S: Did you see kamikazes?

J: Yes, they came right over our ship and hit the HMS Australia, right next to us, early in the morning. In fact, right after we had breakfast. We had a big meal, steak, pork chops, and beautiful apple pie. They treated us real good that day. They figured it was our last meal. The "Nips" came swimming out as human torpedos, and they had these torpedo boats too. We were actually shooting them from the deck of the ship. We had quite a few air raids that morning until we hit the beach. Then we had a few of them for about two days on the beach; then we moved in. We hit there January 9, 1945 and in three days we were up at the Army line which was, I think, I forget how far in it was, ten miles or so. We stopped there and then we got orders to move towards Manila. My job was with the infantry. I was with them all the time. I was with the lead company mostly.

S: What infantry unit was that?

J: It was the 145th, first battalion. Colonel Crooks was his name. He started as an enlisted man. We started moving in and every day we would have a fire fight, a little skirmish, until we got to Clark Field. I guess the 40th Division was having a tough time in some of the battles over there so we took Clark Field, and moved over to the side to give them a hand.

One day I got up on this hill, it was January 31, my birthday. I had a lieutenant over there, I won't mention his name. I was a buck sergeant. The man was stupid, let's put it that way. I don't know where they got him from but he couldn't call a fire worth a crap. I talked to the colonel, the infantry colonel. He wanted fire, and I said, "This man will kill us all," so we relieved him. I was only a buck sergeant, but we relieved him of his command and sent him back.

S: How did that come about? What did you tell him?

J: I told him a couple of times. I told him, "You're stupid, you don't know what the hell you're doing. You're going to kill us all. You can't call fire."

S: Did you just say; get out of here.

J: I couldn't do it; I was only a buck sergeant, but Colonel Crooks, he told him. He said, "I don't want you around here." He called our Colonel--he was from

Cleveland--Colonel Crossen. He died here three years ago, that's why I forgot him. He told me I got myself a section. He said, "You take over until I can find an officer to send up," because my section called for an officer. For three days I had one hell of a good time.

On my birthday we got the Japanese out in the open, in the mountains, and I poured fire on them like crazy. I called in 105s and 155s. I just had a field day. It was one of the best days I had. I could see them with my glasses. They were running around, they were panicky, and they didn't know where the hell to go. I kept dropping it and, oh boy, beautiful fight! Best birthday present I had.

S: Nice fireworks?

J: Better than that. Did you ever watch fireworks, they would go out. This was better. It was really nice. I don't know how many we got there, but we got quite a few. We got them out in the open. Before Clark Field it was the first time I used the rolling barrage. I don't know whether you know what a rolling barrage is?

S: Explain that.

J: We were moving into Clark Field and the infantry jumped out. My job was to call this fire in. I would call it ahead, maybe 100 or 200 yards ahead of the infantry and I would drop them /shells/ ahead, then I would bring them back, drop them ahead, and just roll the barrage forward. I kept artillery firing at least 100 to 200 yards in front of our infantry.

S: The infantry was walking behind, right?

J: Right in behind, beautiful.

S: Did you ever have trouble with short rounds?

J: One time I had one short round, that was after we took Manila. Up in Mt. Pacawagan, I had one. It was a bad round, I could hear it coming over. It missed a half-track and no casualties. I stopped fire right away, ceased fire.

S: How about dud shells?

J: I couldn't tell you because I don't know whether we had duds or not. I wasn't going to stand there and

watch them come in.

S: How was the resistance when you hit the beach?

J: There was no resistance. We had no resistance. In fact, I had no resistance at the beach in any of those places.

S: Now this is Lingayen Gulf, right?

J: Lingayen Gulf, right. Then after that we just kept moving ahead; and we had fire fights. We had quite a few wounded and killed, but not to amount to that much. We kept moving. We actually walked, I think it was, 150 miles. I had a jeep but it was loaded down with equipment, you move when you can. If a tank came by you would jump on that, but most of it was walking, 150 miles into Manila.

S: Did the artillery have any trouble keeping up with the infantry?

J: No, no trouble at all. In fact, we were ahead of the infantry in Manila. I'll explain that to you.

S: Okay.

J: When we got to Manila, we walked right into that town. Without any opposition we got in there and then we hit it. As soon as we got in, I got down the railway station. They / Japanese / were all around and that's when I called for artillery fire. They wouldn't give us observed fire because of the town. They claimed MacArthur owned land, but I don't believe that stuff, and he didn't want to use it. I think he would have used it if he knew what was going on. The C battery, which was from Alliance primarily, sent in two guns. They came in and brought these guns down. There was a breach in this wall--they had big walls around everything--and we set those guns over there because there were pill boxes down the road, down the street. Actually it was a street fight. They were keeping our men down. I could see the infantry sneaking along these houses. It looked like New Orleans in that one section with the balcony and so forth. The infantry would be sneaking around trying to get that pill box which was raising hell. They had a 77 in there. They brought these guns in and the colonel came in with them. We used to cut a fuse on our shells for time, so many

minutes and seconds before it exploded. He cut the fuses on these shells one-tenth and we would go over to this pill box. He would cut it to four-tenths of a second. He got about four-tenths. He cut it for one second, two seconds; it wouldn't work. Finally, he cut that fuse down to four-tenths and they put a big rope on that lanyard and moved. They pulled it and they finally got that pill box, smack. It blew up. Four-tenths of a second, do you believe that? It's in the record, someplace.

That's where we saw a lot of atrocities. In the railway station there were bodies; there must have been three or four hundred bodies piled up, gasoline poured on them ready to burn, half of them dead the other half still alive.

S: Were these soldiers or civilians?

J: Civilians. The medics came in and took care of them. I've seen some after that, but not that bad. That was bad! What happened, I guess, was the Japanese Army pulled out of Manila and it was going to be an open city, but the Navy took over. They fought till the last man in the "Walled City." Before that we crossed the Pasig River, and I got hit for the first time, and that was because I was taking a shit.

S: What do you mean you got hit?

J: I got hit in the hand with little fragments because I was taking a shit. I was a stationary target, honest to God. I was on the other side of the river. These mortars came over and we moved in to the Animal Husbandry Building and we set up an OP. He kept bringing artillery fire on target. We moved around, halfway around the town, and pulled into the theater. I set up an OP there. Before that we had the water works building and there was dead Japs all over the area. Most of this was caused by artillery fire. That's when they stopped using observed fire. When I got to the theater, I sent on OP above the marquee that looked right into the "Walled City," Intramuros. The walls were so thick that you could get two "six by sixes" and drive them right across the top side by side. It was high with big gates because it was an old Spanish fort. They weren't allowed to lob mortars in there because there were a lot of civilians in there. Finally they brought the guns up and used direct fire from 155s.

They just put little dents in there. Finally we broke the gate and the 129th came across the river, breached the wall, and we got inside. It was strictly room to room, house to house. Until we squeezed them all in, they got into a place called "the aquarium." It was all tunnelled under and everything. It was an old fort. You can imagine a medieval fort. We got flame throwers and they started getting them out. Artillery couldn't do anything. We had the pole charges, flame throwers, dumped gasoline in and started a fire. They started to come out through a drainage ditch. We just sat on the wall and waited until they got out about forty or fifty feet and shot them. We wouldn't shoot them at the hole because they wouldn't have come out. We waited until they got out of sight of the exit and shot them down. But we got them all. We cleared that up and it was strictly mop-up after that.

Then we went into a rest area and they made MP's out of us. I had to patrol. I had a section and we would go out. Booze, I was getting booze for two dollars a fifth; two dollars a quart at first, but then the price went up like everything else. We would go out at curfew and we would find these places that would be open--everybody opened up a booze joint over there--and we would close them down. We would always take some evidence with us.

S: Booze?

J: That's right. We had our men running the Bilibid Prison.

S: Let me ask you about that. Did you see any of the prisoners that came out of there?

J: Yes, I've seen them. I've seen them down at Santo Tomas, but not for long. They put them in a hospital and took good care of them and sent them home. They were in bad shape, very bad shape. I've seen them in Bilibid and they were in bad shape. I think the worst of the lot were at Bilibid, but they took good care of them. It makes you want to cry to see them, but they were happy to be alive.

Getting back to the MP duty, I had a helper Grady Keeton, he was from Carbonhill, Alabama. He couldn't read or write, believe it or not. I used to write his letters for him. He probably married the girl because I wrote some good letters. I had a command

car and a little Jewish boy, Willy Feinberg, from Brockton, Massachusetts who was a driver. Myself, Frank Fatich, he was my corporal, and Grady Keeton went down to Dewey Boulevard. There was a big night club there and it was after curfew and it was going full blast, full of officers and everything. We went in. The irony of the whole thing is: Fatich goes in and he arrests the owner right away--we got MP bands on--and Grady Keeton had a clipboard with a pencil and paper to take names of everybody that was in the joint and the guy couldn't read or write! We sent all the people out. It was mostly, strictly officers and so forth, but we got rid of them. Feinberg, I think he was a teetotaler because he got his rifle and started smashing bottles. I stopped him and we took a couple cases and took the man with us. Anyway, this owner started giving Frank Fatich a hard time. Fatich, like I say, was an old coal miner. He was tough. He kept telling him to shut up but the guy wouldn't so he took about three or four cases of whisky, mixed it up pretty good and took him in the command car down to Bilibid prison. At Bilibid prison--we had our men working there, my outfit took over the place--the first thing we did is fine him a little bit and told him if he opened up again and if he broke curfew, we would put him away for life. They fined him out to maybe 5000 pesos which was money for booze, for later on. That was a nice one.

S: You kept that money?

J: Oh, yes. We spent it. They got it back; we bought booze from them. What else could you do?

I had a fellow and he was a Yale man, believe it or not. He was a buck private and he didn't want any rank. He had a chance to get rank. We went into the rest area down in the Philippines. There was this big house; had a swimming pool and everything. We found out that we were pulling out. We were going to Mt. Pacawagan. We formed the combat team, the 145th Combat Team, which is artillery, infantry, medics, and engineers, just a small combat team. He made up a legal document and sold that house for 25,000 pesos and we bought booze with that.

When we went to Mt. Pacawagan we had a hell of a fight there. We took everything we were suppose to take. We relieved the 6th Division, 20th Infantry. They sat there for about twenty days or something.

They didn't move. They took them out that night, that morning we had it. We got pretty well beat up!

S: That was the 6th Division?

J: Yes.

S: To what would you attribute your success and their failure in taking the mountain?

J: I guess they had there orders to stay there and just protect it. I don't know what it was. I couldn't tell you. I know what contributed to our success. Our colonel, commander of the combat team, made a bet with the general in charge of the 6th Division that we would have that mountain in twenty-four hours. They bet some whiskey and I think that's what did it. We took it. We took it in the morning, or about 12 noon. We jumped off at 9 at night and at 12 noon we had the top of that mountain. We had quite a bit of banzai charges up there.

S: Where you confronted with a banzai charge?

J: Yes, I got this eye. I had my section, three men with me, and, I think it was, I Company of the 145th. There were sixty men left and no officers at the time and the men were mostly diseased and wounded so I called in and called for an officer. They told me I had a company. Just about that time we got a banzai charge. I had a carbine with a bayonet. The bayonet was only eight inches or six inches smaller than the carbine. We fixed bayonets and we charged against them. We killed 28. I got this eye and I got a little slash on the back, but nobody was killed. The next day I got blown out of a hole by a mortar. I ended up in the hospital. I came down with malaria, jaundice, anemia and shock, the whole works. I went down to 82 pounds in the hospital. I stayed there about a month.

In April we celebrated our third year overseas and we had a big party. We took over a big mansion. I was released from the hospital to go to that party and when I got back about 4 o'clock in the morning this one nurse wanted to know who in the hell I was. I was so drunk, I told her. She said, "You're supposed to be sick in bed." I said, "Baby, that's where I'm going. I'm sick and I'm going to bed." Next morning I had a relapse. The doctor chewed my



ass out for boozing it up as much as I did, but what the hell. I was down to 82 pounds. He brought me out of it pretty good. That doctor--his name was Dr. Colman, he was from Cleveland some place--took care of me like a baby. Then right after that they brought me the Bronze Star. Then I got relieved. The man that relieved me, his name was Gosciowski. He was from Jackson, Michigan. He relieved me and when I got transferred from the field hospital to the general hospital he was in the bed next to me. He got hit the first day he got up there. We stayed together and we got discharged from the hospital together.

We got out of the hospital and they put us in a replacement center or something. I didn't want to be over there. That's when I had a little problem with a big sergeant over there. I didn't know about Truman passing that desegregation law. There was a big sergeant, a First Sergeant, trying to tell me what to do, until I held my knife at his throat and then he left me alone. I was a hell of a starter. I was small. I got thrown out of there. The colonel called me in and told me what happened / I had not realized / because I didn't see any of them in the front line fighting. I said nobody is going to tell me when to go down and load ships and stuff, no way.

S: Were there any blacks in the 37th at this time?

J: No way! Not at the time. He gave me my discharge papers and said, "All right, go on." I said, "Where's my outfit at?" He said, "Up in the valley." I said, "How am I going to get there?" He said, "We're going to send you by train to a little town out there." I didn't even know the name of the town. It had a little L-4 landing strip, a liaison plane landing strip. I figured we would get a ride from our boys back to the outfit. We stayed there for about two days. The food was lousy, so we took off. I got back to my outfit up at a place called San Fernando. In my outfit the rotation already started and my name was on the list--I had enough points to go home.

As soon as I walked in he spotted me, he said; "Oh boy, your papers didn't get turned in." He went through the files and got my papers back out and sent them in. In the meantime I hadn't been paid for a couple of months. It took them a little while before they got my pay together. What the hell, there was no place to spend it. Right away they sent me back on the line. I was in pretty bad shape.

I went out on the line again as forward observer bringing in artillery fire. We used artillery extensively. It saved a lot of lives. Finally the doctors said no more for me. They brought me back and they gave me a Filipino platoon, sixty men, with an officer. I was only a buck sergeant. Every morning this officer would come up, knock on the pole of my tent, and say, "Sergeant Javorsky, salute me." I would try to be out on security patrols. They were kooks. They weren't worth a nickle. By that time my name came in and the old man called me in and said, "Hey, you can go home on rotation, but I got something else for you. If you stay to the end you will get a direct appointment." He would give me a field commision. I asked him--his name was Colonel Crossen--"I understand you're going home?" He said, "Yes, I'm going to be on the same boat with you." I turned it down.

I was on deck of a Dutch ship, the Slaughterdyke coming home when we got the news they dropped the atomic bomb. I was on the high seas. We hit the tail end of a typhoon that sunk a lot of our ships in the Philippines. We lost a screw. We were running around in circles for awhile and I forget how long it took us, twenty some days to get back. We never stopped.

I was in charge of the kitchen because I was a sick man. I ate pretty good on the ship; a special diet bag for me, nothing but the best, corned beef and all that stuff, but they didn't have much. Fresh bread, I was in charge of making sure that the guys sliced the bread right. We got home. We got to San Francisco. My sister was stationed down there.

S: She was in the Marines?

J: Yes. We were quarantined so we went to Angel Island, Oakland Bay. I wasn't allowed to call out, so they said I could send a wire. By the time she got the wire I was at Camp Atterbury, Maryland. Through process I got new clothes and everything. When we got to Atterbury, I don't know how long I was there, they decided we might as well go home. Then I came home. I was discharged August 10.

S: 1945?

J: I went home and then we bought some civilian clothes.

I was having dinner at an Italian friends house when they announced the surrender. They all felt so sorry for me, I looked so skinny. He said, "Hey Steve, you come down to my house and I'm going to make you food." I went over there, and my God, the old Italian dinners, you had with the chicken, the pork chops, the soup, the spaghetti, and the wine. While we were eating they announced VJ-Day. He said, "I'm going to taste my wine. I'm not going to work today."

Believe it or not I went to church. I got up and said, "Excuse me," then I went down to the cathedral. I got a ride there. A friend of mine had a car, and I asked him to take me to church. I went to church and prayed for them. That is it.

S: That was the end of the war?

J: That was the end of the war. Actually the worst war started when I got home; trying to find a job. You get the run around. The VA ran me around so bad it wasn't funny. I fought it for twenty years for a hearing aid.

You asked me before about the Fiji troops, I want to tell you a little incident that happened which was in an intelligence report I read. I used to get to read all of them. There was a mission down in Bougainville, up on Numa Numa Trail. I forget exactly the name of the mission. The Japanese used to come in and occupy that for a day or two and observe our troops then they would pull out. The battalion that we had, they had to be part of the 37th because they were attached to us, would go in when they found out they were there and would try to get them. The idea was to get a couple prisoners so we could make them talk and see what was going on. This was before any of this heavy action started. This kept going on; the Fijians would get in there right after they /Japanese/ left and after the Fijians would leave the Japs would come in. There was no meeting each other. This one time the Fijians went in and then pulled out, but they left a couple of Fiji soldiers there. The Japs came in and caught them by surprise or something. They cut them up pretty bad. There was one of them cut up pretty bad, but he managed to crawl into the jungle. The Fijians came back up and they saw this one who was all cut up. They patched him up as best they could and he told them what happened. Well, the Fijians pulled back,

and they waited. The Japs came in and the Fijians ambushed them. They killed the whole patrol that came in, but they saved two men. They got these two men and they tied them up to two coconut trees facing each other. The Fijians were the happiest people in the world. They would sit down and sing, and they would drink cava, that is made out of a root. It can paralyze you from the waist down if you drink enough of it. They were drinking it and singing and finally they went over and they cut this one loose. They cleaned him up and they stretched him out and commenced to skin him alive! They would bring him to and take chunks of meat out of him. They chewed it a little bit and spit it out. Every time this other Jap would pass out they would bring him to and they would let him see what happened. Then they would sit down and drink some more cava. Finally, they went over there, cut the ropes to set him loose, kicked him in the ass, and sent him back. Never again did a patrol come up to that mission. That's . . . What would you call that?

S: Intimidation?

J: No, Psychological Warfare--their style!

S: They were tough?

J: They were tough. I talked to this one and I asked him about how he liked combat. He said, "It is all right." He also said, "I was always scared but my father told me the first Japanese you catch, you go and bite a piece out of him, chew it up and swallow it and it will give you power." Then he said, "I did. I don't know what it did to me, but I'm not afraid anymore." It may be revolting, but fifty years before this they were cannibals.

S: Psychological?

J: I don't know, it worked down at the mission. They were good troops.

S: When you first landed on the Philippines, what was the attitude of the Filipino people towards you? Did they all seem that they were resistance fighters?

J: They were happy that we were there.

S: Did they all claim to be resistance fighters?

J: Everyone of them. I'll tell you a little story of what happened. Everyone was a guerrilla fighter and everyone was a commando. When we got to Mt. Pacawagan, somebody in headquarters or something decided that these guys are either lieutenants, colonels, or captains. Overnight they made officers of them; self-made officers. We got to Mt. Pacawagan and we needed carriers, so they sent them up to us. It was nothing to see a Filipino with a captian's bar, or a colonel's leaf or a major's leaf carrying up ammunition or food. They had brand spanking new suntan uniforms. They probably were good guerrilla fighters. I had seen one at the Bureau of Animal Husbandry building. They brought this Filipino prisoner down and wanted me to take him and I had nothing to do with it. I said, "You got guerrilla headquarters down the road, take him down there." He said he was muka pieta, was pro-Jap. I said, "I don't know what the hell to do." They took him down to the river, shot him, and kicked him in. What they were doing, most of them, was getting revenge on their old neighbors and so forth. That is what it was. I wouldn't trust any of them.

S: How about any communist elements; did you run into any of that?

J: No. We were all communists at the time because we shared and shared alike. (Laughter)

S: Did you have any ill feelings toward General MacArthur letting the First Cavalry in Manila first after the 37th had . . .

J: Yes, but it's not right to say it. We got more or less a little personal satisfaction out of burying the dead of the the First Cavalry in Manila, but outside of that it was wrong. It should not have been done. It's in our 37th Division history.

S: Do you feel he did that because the First Cavalry was regular army and you were National Gaurd?

J: Right, it is possible. He thought he had a flying column and everything. It wasn't right. He should have never sent them in the way he did. I think that was bad tactics because they got slaughtered. Most of them got slaughtered and that was wrong, unless he thought that it was an open city which it was not. No, he should have never done that.

S: Getting back to the banzai attack that you encountered; can you describe it? What was a banzai attack?

J: What's the word; fanaticism. They were fanatics.

We were holding this little section on this hill and they figured they were going to knock us off. They were desperate because it was getting towards the end. I guess it was part of their religion; they had to kill some of us before they could go to heaven of something. I don't know!

S: They would just charge at you and . . .

J: Charge, yes! A bayonet charge. We fired until they got close and then we . . .

S: Hand to hand?

J: By that time we had our little carbines and we could swing them around real good.

S: The last question I want to ask you is did you ever listen to Tokyo Rose?

J: Tokyo Rose, I never listened to, but there was a program they called the Zero Hour. That's what we listened to. That was down at Guadalcanal and everything.

S: Was that Japanese?

J: Yes, Japanese. Where they get their information, I don't know, but they were correct.

S: Did they ever mention the 37th Division by name?

J: Yes, they knew when we were in Fiji. They knew we moved to Guadalcanal. They knew when we were in Bougainville. They knew wherever we were at. How, I don't know but they knew. I'll never forget the Zero Hour. We were listening to it and they closed the program that night. Do you know what they played: The Stars and Strips Forever. Honest to God, so help me God, we laughed then--coming out of Japan, The Stars and Strips Forever by John Philip Sousa. Maybe it was Tokyo Rose, I don't know, but they called it the Zero hour. I know that.

S: How did you know that you were fighting the 6th Division?

J: They have a patch. They wore their patch.

S: What kind of patch?

J: It was a square. It was a red square, we were told by intelligence.

S: At the end of the war the 37th was considered a heavy weight division?

J: Yes. Being a National Guardsmen, you got all this shit, no doubt about it. We just proved to them that we were better than anybody. During the campaign down through the Cagayan Valley after Manila we were making 23, 24, or 25 miles a day. We were jumping one regiment over the other. We came down over the valley and the Japs would scatter into the hills. They cut us off a few times but we always took care of them.

S: Can you think of anything you would like to say; any experience you had that maybe I haven't asked yet?

J: I don't know? There were so many. I can't think of that. I can't put it all together. If I could start from the beginning and really go day by day, I would . . .

S: That's fine. I would like to thank you for this interview. It will help our knowledge of the 37th Division.

J: I had a little book, but I can't find it, about my outfit, the 135th Field Artillery. It gives a history on it. It is just a little pamphlet that I picked up after the war. It started out originally as the First Cleveland Grays and it was the first outfit to use trucks for hauling artillery pieces. They used old brewery trucks up in Cleveland. It goes back to the Civil War, our 135th. It was the oldest National Guard outfit outside of the thirteen original states. Our battalion flag was a regimental first and later it became a battalion when they had combined seventeen battle streamers on it. They probably picked up one or two in Korea, I don't know. When I left there were seventeen battles from Chancellorville, et cetera. The Mexican incident, or whatever you call it, where they chased Pancho Villa all around. They never did catch them, but they were there. The First World War, they were in the middle of it. They were a heavy weight right then.

They were right in the middle of it then. That was the Old Square Division. It was supposed to be a holding division. During the First World War they got a hell of a record. They were kind of split up, some went to Belgium, some fought on the French front, and so forth, and some ended up in Germany. They had a hell of a good record; 596 days of combat in the Pacific. They got some fighting down.

S: Forty-two months?

J: Yes.

S: What was your impression of the Marines?

J: They were trained different. They were gung-ho.

S: Do you feel they took unnecessary action?

J: Yes. To find out about the Marines, you should talk to some of the guys who went down to Rice Anchorage. Frank Sarisky should be able to tell you. I think he made it down there. I think he worked with the Marines down there. In fact, there was a little foul up when they hit that place, Anchorage, Baroke Harbor, New Georgia. A heavy weapons company hit the beach first because they were supposed to follow the Marines in. They hit the beach first and set up and then the Marines came in. They fouled up on the landing, but they never lost any. I think at that time the Marines had 300 casualties. I think one of our men drowned and one of them got bit by a snake or something down there.

S: That was it?

J: They had a good perimeter set up. Marines came walking down the trail and gung-ho . . . They were firing from the hip; you don't do that in the jungle. Their tactics were different.

S: They thought they were more of an offensive organization?

J: No, I wouldn't say that. They thought they were more men than we were, but actually 90 percent of them were kids. They were told that they were invincible from what I gather. I have seen them and I have worked with them. The ones I have worked with were nothing but kids. Down there they were good.



Frank Sarisky was our machine gun sergeant. He had his guns set up and the Marines were falling all over him giving his positions away. He was pissed, boy!

S: What about the Americal Division; what did you think of them?

J: They were good boys. Naturally, you figure yours were the best.

END OF INTERVIEW